Army to Check 585 LSD Test Subjects

Physical, Mental Exams Set for Persons Given Drug in '50s, '60s

7/19/75 By Bill Richards
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The Army announced last night that it plans to find and give physical and mental examinations to hundreds of persons who took part in an extensive series of LSD experiments during the 1950s and 1960s.

An Army spokesman, citing "possible after-effects from LSD that were not known at the time of the tests," said the Army knows of 585 persons who received the hallucinogenic drug at least one time between 1959 and 1967, when the tests were ended.

The spokesman said that the Army is now trying to determine how many more persons were involved in other LSD tests, which he said took place between 1956 and 1959. All persons who were involved in the Army-sponsored testing will be included in the examination program, the spokesman said.

The announcement, which followed a high-level meeting of Army officials yesterday, is the first official acknowledgement of tests with LSD on soldiers and civilians.

The spokesman said that psychological examinations were made of all persons involved in the testing by the Army before the LSD was administered. But he said that apparently no followup programs were undertaken on anyone in the tests until last year.

The spokesman said that last February the Army began seeking 34 soldiers who took part in an LSD test conducted in 1960 at Fort Benning, Ga. One member of that group told Army doctors last year that he believed he may have developed epilepsy because of his participation in the test.

The Army spokesman said 19 of the members of that test have been located and tested, but he said results of the tests would not be available until the fall.

Completion of the overall testing program of those involved in the Army's LSD experiments will be "a large, difficult and time-consuming undertaking," according to the Army spokesman. He said the followup tests also will be conducted by the National Academy of Sciences and the Veterans Administration.

Initial questions about the effects of LSD tests by government agencies were raised last month after a report by the Rockefeller Commission that said the CIA administered LSD to a civilian scientist working for the Army. The scientist committed suicide several days later.

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LSD, From A1

The scientist was identified as Dr. Frank Olson last week at a press conference held by his family in Frederick, Md. Olson's family said they plan to sue the CIA.

A Baltimore psychiatrist said this week that he had been part of another set of experiments run by the Army and the University of Maryland that involved hundreds of soldiers and civilians who were tested with LSD at the university's medical school in Baltimore and at the Army Chemical Center at Edgewood, Md.

The Army spokesman yesterday declined to reveal the nature of the LSD testing but said the military is looking through its test reports to determine which ones could be declassified. He said a total of 323 persons were given LSD at Edgewood during the 1959 to 1967 period and 262 others were tested with the drug at other Army bases during that period.

A New York Congressman who is a member of the House Armed Services Committee said yesterday he had learned that other branches of the services also tested their members with LSD. Rep. Thomas J. Downey (D) said servicemen were told never to reveal their part in the tests because of national security regulations and that this may have caused some to avoid treatment for problems that arose because of their exposure to LSD.

A number of experimental LSD programs have also been carried on by other government agencies, chiefly through the sponsorship of the National Institute of Mental Health.

The Army's announcement of its followup tests yesterday did not include any other branch of the service or any other federal agencies.

The Army spokesman said yesterday it expects that its tests will take between two to five days for each person who was given LSD and that each would get a complete physical examination, neurological tests and a psychiatric test.

The examinations will be conducted at several places around the country, he said, and will also involve persons who have not been given LSD to determine what after-effects may have been due to the drug and what would be considered normal for a group of the same age.

The soldiers who were involved in the LSD tests, the spokesman said, were tested both in laboratory and field settings. Those tested in labs, he said, individually signed statements of their willingness to take part in the experiments. Those who were given the drug in field tests did not sign individual releases but were signed up as units.

According to the spokesman, the Army used LSD in a variety of experiments. In 1957 at Edgewood, for example, 16 soldiers were given the drug and then were pitted against each other in a volley ball game. Another group was told to break down their rifles while under the influence of the drug.

The testing, the spokesman said, involved troops at bases in Maryland, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Utah.